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For Immediate Release

November 8, 2011

El Camino College Schedules Grand Opening for New Veterans Center

El Camino College will host a grand opening for the new Veterans Center at 1:00 p.m. on November 15 in the Student Activities Center, East Lounge.

“For those who have served our country it is our turn to serve them through our new Veterans Center,” El Camino College President Thomas M. Fallo said. “This new facility offers a welcoming place where students may gather and access the many student services available at El Camino College.”

The program will include remarks from student veteran Scott Hookey and the keynote address will be delivered by one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, Lt. Col. Robert Friend, a member of the elite World War II African American Red Tail Squadron. The celebration will close with a tour and the unveiling of artwork donated to the Veterans Center.

“The new Veterans Center is beautiful – it offers a great place to get things done and also to just relax,” said Dwayne Taylor, a recently retired 25-year Army infantryman who was injured during a tour in the Sinai Peninsula. After retiring and while recovering from his injuries, he enrolled at El Camino College to train for a career in refrigeration. He is nearly finished with his classes, and already has a certificate, license, and a job lined up in his new profession.

The new Veterans Center is designed to be a gathering place for El Camino College student veterans so they may study, get to know one another, and have a place of their own to hang out between classes. Amenities such as computers, a couch, and workspace make it an ideal location to spend free time.

“We truly want the Veterans Center to be a place where our veterans interact with each other and feel they have a place of their own,” said William Mulrooney, El Camino College director of admissions & records, who will serve as master of ceremonies at the celebration. “We want our students to know that El Camino College is here to help them and we are confident that this new center will create a community of support for our veteran students.”

Support services available at the Veterans Center include access to computers, computer assistance, a study area, workshops, and referrals to a variety of resources, both at the college and in the community. Staff can help students with paperwork regarding their educational benefits, as well as assist them in becoming successful in the college environment.

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“The staff at the Veterans Center, they really know how to treat you right,” Taylor added. “They are there to answer your questions and help with your paperwork. They can also set you up with a counselor and talk about your goals and find the best option for you.”

To celebrate the opening, Tuskegee Airman, Lt. Col. Friend will speak of his experiences in the service. Friend’s career in the military began when took a test for the Air Force in early 1942 while working as a junior physicist in Washington, D.C. He was told to report to Tuskegee and began his formal training in early 1943. By the end of the year, he was sent overseas as part of the elite group of World War II African American Red Tail pilots.

Lt. Col. Friend was assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group stationed in Europe, as Combat Operations Officer at the squadron and group levels. In this capacity he was responsible for planning and organizing the implementation of strategic and tactical air missions.

Following the War, Friend continued a technical career with the Air Force. He worked on major programs including service as Assistant Deputy of Launch Vehicles including Titan, Atlas, Delta and space shuttle. As Foreign Technology Program Director, he monitored and reported upon foreign research and development programs to support development of systems to offset foreign capabilities posing a potential threat to the national security of the U.S. He was also the director of the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Program, which investigated cases of unidentified flying objects brought to the attention of the Air Force.

In honor of veterans all over the country, six artwork panels representing a branch of the U.S. Military were created and donated to the new Veterans Center by the South Bay Folk Artists, a chapter of the Society of Decorative Painters. The work “Tribute to our Troops” was designed by chapter artists as a tribute to the armed services and those who have served. Twelve volunteers, including a few chapter artists who are also El Camino College employees, worked on the canvas panels that cover a large wall in the Veterans Center.

For more information on El Camino College Veterans Services, contact mcangel@elcamino.edu.

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